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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MEXICO 001947

SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: TROUBLED PRD ENTERS FINAL STRETCH IN MID-TERM
ELECTIONS

REF: MEXICO 1461

Classified By: Pol MinCouns Charles V. Barclay. Reasons: 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Summary: A campaign that started with a whimper is ending with groans as the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) winds up its elections activities before July 5 polling. In Michoacan, accusations that the government is using ongoing law enforcement operations to political advantage seemed to backfire on PRD governor Leonel Godoy by keeping the May arrests of PRD-affiliated state and local officials in the public eye. In Mexico City, intra-party tensions further splintered the party after Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) called on supporters to vote for a Workers Party (PT) candidate for presidency of an important Mexico City borough. Several PRD candidates dropped out of their races last week to support rival candidacies. Many demoralized leftist voters are likely to cast their votes for other parties, spoil their ballots or simply stay home on July 5. End Summary.

Michoacan Arrests

¶2. (SBU) The May 26 Michoacan arrests of 28 high ranking officials (reftel) on narcotics charges, the majority of whom were from the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD), continue to reflect poorly on the party. Michoacan governor Leonel Godoy maintained his bitter criticism of the arrests, only serving to keep the story alive and add fuel to the fire. Senior National Action Party (PAN) leaders, including party leader German Martinez, questioned why Godoy was protesting so loudly, intimating that he might have something to hide. Media reported that the Office of the Attorney General (PGR) might be investigating whether the PRD governor had received campaign financing from Michoacan's principal cartel, La Familia. Godoy flatly denied the insinuation.

¶3. (C) The Michoacan governor had been among the most supportive of Calderon's aggressive anti-cartel push. Some analysts told us they were surprised the president let Martinez so aggressively sling mud, worrying that it might undermine future cooperation in a key narco hot zone. While putting on a defiant face publicly, PRD activists have told poloffs that the Michoacan scandal has endured longer than they expected and has damaged PRD's image in one of its bastions of support. No statewide polling data is available to gauge the extent to which PRD has lost voters in Michoacan, but the party is clearly worried about holding

onto a traditional stronghold.

Iztapalapa Conflict

¶4. (SBU) In Mexico City, the race among leftist contenders for the presidency of a large inner-city borough led to more party infighting, accentuating the tensions between former presidential candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) and PRD leadership. Mexico's electoral tribunal overturned the results of the primary election in Iztapalapa and ordered a PRD favorite to abandon her race. PRD found a replacement, but a dissatisfied AMLO threw his support behind a rival Workers Party (PT) candidate. AMLO then engaged in a highly publicized spat with PRD President Jesus Ortega and other party leaders. Ortega threatened to expel AMLO. Mexico City Mayor Marcelo Ebrard, once an AMLO supporter but increasingly staking out an independent position for himself as a presidential hopeful, also weighed in. He complained that AMLO had not consulted party leaders before making the decision to support the PT candidate, violating a tacit agreement that, while he could endorse non-PRD candidates elsewhere, he would not oppose PRD candidates in Mexico City.

In his most bitter attack on the party in months, AMLO slammed the PRD for "betraying Mexican democracy" by not strongly objecting to the decision.

¶5. (C) According to a well-placed PRD Federal District official, Iztapalapa is one of Mexico's City's largest and most sought after bastions of political support. She told Poloff that AMLO may pressure the winner of the race to

MEXICO 00001947 002 OF 002

abandon the office so he can put one of his own in place. This would lead to further party bloodletting, and a potential clash with PAN and PRI members of the borough council.

Candidates on the Run

¶6. (SBU) Further undermining the PRD's morale and standing among voters, a handful of local PRD candidates dropped out of their races in recent days in order to support their opponents. This development has surprised and frustrated national party leaders. In Campeche the PRD candidate for governor threw his support behind the PAN candidate; and the PRD mayoral candidate in Queretaro withdrew from the race to support the PRI. These revelations last week prompted Ortega to lash out and accuse the PAN and PRI of "buying" candidates and directly accuse PAN President German Martinez of intervening in Campeche, calling the situation a "vulgar purchase."

¶7. (C) Comment: PRD's perennial internal discipline problem has only worsened in recent weeks, and the party's ability to mount a coherent campaign on behalf of candidates throughout the country is crippled. The Federal District official told Poloff that Ortega's legitimacy within the party has suffered by running a weak campaign. AMLO's antics have cost him as well. Consulta Mitofsky's last survey before Sunday's election puts PRD support among likely voters at slightly more than 13 percent. The pollster projects that the party could lose up to a quarter of its current 127 seats in the federal Chamber of Deputies. PRD winners will be few and far between on Sunday and after. End Comment.

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